

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

WAKE COUNTY WORKINGMEN'S ASSOCIATION,

IN THE COURT HOUSE AT RALEIGH,

FEBRUARY 6, 1860,

BY

FRANK. I. WILSON, ESQ.

RALEIGH:
"STANDARD" OFFICE PRINT.
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RALEIGH, N. C., February 7, 1860.

FRANK. I. WILSON, Esq.:

Dear Sir:—The undersigned, a portion of the members of the "Wake County Workingmen's Association," beg that you will permit us to publish the Address delivered by you before our Association in the Court House last night. We doubt not every member of the Association would sign this request did an opportunity offer. In that Address you embody our sentiments and our feelings in every particular, and we wish to send copies of it to our friends throughout the State, that they may see and judge for themselves whether we are traitors or not.

Thanking you for the defense you have made for us—a defense at once bold and just—we hope you will comply with our request.

Your obliged Friends,

JNO. R. HARRISON,	MARK M. WILLIAMS,
Q. BUSBEE,	WM. J. LOUGEE,
S. M. PARISH,	L. N. KEITH,
J. N. BUNTING,	J. McK. HENSON,
D. C. DUDLEY,	JOS. J. JACKSON,
H. RABEY,	B. F. BENTON,
DAVID A. WICKER,	HENRY GORMAN,
C. KUESTER,	P. LENAHAN.
THOS. GRIER,	

RALEIGH, N. C., February 8, 1860.

GENTLEMEN:

Your note of yesterday has been received. I thank you for the complimentary terms in which you are pleased to speak of my address, and am glad that it met your approval. Would it were worthier; but such as it is, it is at your disposal.

Very truly yours,

FRANK. I. WILSON.

To JNO. R. HARRISON and others.

ADDRESS.

Mr. President, and Gentlemen of the Association:

We have assembled here to-night in a public building, the doors of which are open, and in which lights are burning. We wear no masks, and no disguises. We meet as freemen, and for no unlawful purpose, and therefore are not afraid to show our faces. Our meetings are public, and all are welcome to witness our proceedings, whether they come as friends, whether they come for information, whether they come from curiosity, or whether they come as *spies*. For what purpose they come is to us, in the abstract, immaterial. We welcome all, be their intentions good or evil; for while we can and will duly appreciate kindness and justice, we can well afford to smile with contempt at misrepresentation and injustice. Conscious of our own rectitude of purpose, the curses hurled at us fall harmless at our feet. Those curses will doubtless go home to roost; and one of my objects, in this Address, is to lend them a helping *foot*, to facilitate their return to stygian depths, that they may the sooner reach their paternal home, and be met with the frowns of their father, because they had not accomplished the mission on which they were sent.

Our preachers tell us that our lot has been cast in a Christian land. I will not deny this, but I sometimes have my doubts about it. Of one thing I am sure:—as Workingmen, we have fallen on evil times. Dark and troublous clouds are lowering around us. Compelled to the *disgrace* of labor, either mental or physical, to maintain ourselves, our wives and children, the keen scented nostrils of aristocratic *patriots*, smell treason in every movement of our muscles, and in every idea of our brains. In every pulse-throb of the blood that courses through our veins, they feel a jar to the temple of

Liberty ; and in every word we utter they hear the thunder tones of intolerable impudence and insolence. Ever and anon their wrath, like arrowy lightnings, cleaves the gloom above and around us, with a light whose lurid gleam is quite as substantial, if not as fearful, as Chaos itself. Should not this appal us ? Should we not pause, dismayed, horror-stricken, and trembling in every joint ? Should we not crouch at the feet of these *superiors*, and humbly beg, as *inferiors*, permission to breathe the free air of God ? What ! a man with the smell of the workshop upon him, or with the pale face of mental exhaustion, to dare utter his sentiments ! to dare express his views ! to dare have a soul, a mind, a thought of his own ! Surely the acme of impudence is reached, and the walls of insolence scaled.

Mr. President, when I came into this Association—and permit me to say I was one among the first to come into it, and intend to be one of the last to go out of it—I say, when I came into this Association, I had no idea of the importance to which it was so speedily to elevate us all. Previous to that time we worked on quietly, in our respective vocations, maintaining our families, educating our children, and fulfilling, to the best of our abilities, our respective duties. No one talked about us ; no one bestowed more than a passing notice upon us ; and no one seemed to think we were very mean personally, or very dangerous as citizens. We were of the *small-fry* class, neither potential nor consequential, and of very little importance any way. Now we are noticed, talked about, and honored with magnificent abuse ! We are misrepresented, our avowed purposes distorted, and aims and objects are attributed to us that we never dreamed of. I thought we were associating ourselves together for the purpose of concerted action in changing the system of taxation in our State, and to promote the interests of labor. I was simple enough to believe we had the right to form such an Association ; and in my moral and mental perceptions, I was so obtuse as not to see “treasons, stratagems and spoils” in the movement. I had not then discovered that we, as a body, were so weak, so pliant, so dishonest, as to become the tools of “designing dem-

agogues," and the instruments of rascally "office hunters." Yet these things have been charged upon us by those who wish to pass as "honorable" men. Dare we deny the charge? Why, what might be the consequences? I trust the rest of you feel comfortable, but for myself, I confess to much trepidation. Workingmen dare have opinions of their own! Workingmen dare form an Association! Workingmen dare do any thing but submit! In the words of a wealthy and brainless woman I once knew, when a journeyman carpenter expressed some independent sentiments in her hearing: "In the name of God, what *is* poor folks comin' to?" (Applause.)

I said that one of my objects in this Address was to facilitate the curses sent up at us, on their return passage, down from whence they came. I will commence with the smallest of them all, and will soon have it on board the Tartarian train, duly checked for its destination. I choose to dispose of small matters with brief comment; and if that brevity accomplish the object intended, so much the better.

I noticed in the Tarboro' *Mercury*, a few weeks ago, what purported to be, and no doubt was, an extract from a letter from Raleigh; asserting that there were not twenty-five men belonging to this Association. We all know that was a falsehood, and whether the writer was ignorant and malicious, or knowing and wilful, in asserting such falsehood, is, to us, a matter of supreme indifference. Who the writer is I know not—neither do I care; but I would like to know what paths he travels, that I might shun them *on dark nights*. The man who asserts a thing, not knowing whether it be false or true, is malicious; and, in my estimation is, if possible, meaner than he who knowingly asserts a falsehood. The writer of that "extract" can take either horn of the dilemma he chooses; and whichever he may take, I guess he will be like the Irishman told the traveller he would be in the choice of roads: "Take whichever you plaze, and you'll wish you'd taken the other." (Laughter.) He thought the Association a very small concern, but he showed his natural cowardice by being hugely frightened at it. The cause for fear was very insignificant, but fully sufficient to scare him away from the truth. Let him pass. (Applause.)

And now, fellow-workingmen, I come to a point at which my blood might well boil in its veins, and my equanimity be temporarily lost—a point at which passion, scorn, contempt and loathing might be excused for rising superior to calmness and discretion. I shall try to restrain the feelings of indignation which naturally arise, so that they shall not overleap the bounds of prudence and judgment; but what I have to say, I shall say upon my own responsibility, and I hold myself accountable for my language.

Fellow-workingmen, are you Abolitionists? (Cries of "No.") Do you sympathize with Abolitionists? ("No, no.") Would you furnish Abolitionists with weapons to assail the South, or the institutions of the South. ("No!") If I were asking you these questions in earnest—if I doubted your fidelity to the South, and, as a self-constituted judge, were interrogating you for the purpose of discovering your real sentiments, having suspicions that you were disloyal, would you not rise in the wrath of a just indignation and hurl me through yonder window, not caring whether I lighted upon my head or my feet? ("Yes, we would!") Yet the National *Era*, an Abolition sheet published in Washington City, that with the accustomed recklessness of all Abolition sheets, seizes hold of and perverts every thing to its own base purposes, charges you with aiding and abetting Abolitionism. But you say: "What of that? The *Era* is an Abolition sheet, edited by a God-forsaken, soulless, honorless abortion of North-Carolina—a thing whose native land has spewed him out into the filthy receptacle of fanaticism and hypocrisy—and of course no one will regard what he says—of course no honorable man will bring that paper forward as testimony against us." ("No, none.") So far I agree with you. No one whose good opinion is worth having will form a bad opinion of you from what the *Era* or any other Abolition paper may say of you; and when the arguments of such papers are re-produced against you in Southern papers, you may rest assured that such Southern papers are hard run for materials, and unscrupulous in their search for them. Of the conductors of such papers, I leave you and the public to form your own estimate. They

evidently intend, so far as in them lies, to throw around you the mantle of infamy, to degrade you, to cut you off from respectable society, and to render you loathsome, despised and abhorred beings. It is a charge against you of that blackest of all crimes, *TREASON*—treason to your native or adopted land. (Sensation.) But for the endorsement of the *Era* by certain papers in North-Carolina, I should feel that I was insulting you by asking, Are you traitors? What is your response? (Cries of, "No—we are not!")

I knew your answer would be an indignant "No!" Then you brand the *Era* and *its friends* with falsehood. I say "*its friends*," for when one man endorses for another it is *prima facie* evidence of friendship. (A voice, "That is so.") So when one paper copies an article from another without comment, it is a tacit approval of the sentiments contained in that article. Certain papers in North-Carolina have gone further than this: they have called special attention to the *Era* article, published it as evidence of your unsoundness, and as an argument against your attempts to change our system of taxation. The papers of this State that have published that article, some with and some without comment, are, so far as I now recollect, the Warrenton *News*, the Charlotte *Bulletin*, the Salisbury *Banner*, the Tarboro' *Mercury*, and last and least, a certain sheet of our own City which may be seen by the aid of magnifying glasses, called the *Tight-Squeeze*. (Laughter and Applause.) (If any other papers in the State have published the article mentioned, I beg that they will consider themselves included in the foregoing list.) Here you have the battery—the *Era*, the *News*, the *Bulletin*, the *Banner*, the *Mercury*, and the *Tight-Squeeze*. Will you still resist? or will you surrender at discretion? (A voice—"we will resist.") Will you storm the battery? or will you ground your arms? For my part, I am for fighting a little longer, and if need be, a little stronger. (Applause.)

Mr. President, my language may seem strong, and even bitter; but remember the provocation. I am attacking no one, but am only repelling the attacks of others. Did I say *attacks*?—I should have said I was only *resenting insults*; for

I know of no insult greater than the charge of Abolitionism upon Southern men—ay, upon an Association of Southern men, as honest of purpose as any in the world. The man that would dare charge it to my face, or to yours, or to the face of any member of this Association, would receive the punishment due to such an outrage. (A voice—"He would.") And what is the difference between such a charge direct, and an insinuation of it, except that the latter is worse than the former, inasmuch as its author desires to create an impression which he *dare not assert in direct terms?* I had rather admit negro evidence than that of any Abolition paper. (A voice—"So had I.")

Sir, who has occasioned all this controversy about *ad valorem* taxation and the Workingmen's Association? As an Association, what have we done to stir up strife, or to subject ourselves to the implication of sympathy with Abolitionism? We adopted certain resolutions, as our platform, which we published to the world; we adopted a Constitution and by-laws for our own government, almost *verbatim* with the Constitution and by-laws of the State Agricultural Society; we issued an Address explanatory of our aims and objects, and setting forth some of our reasons for the changes we desired in our system of taxation. And how have we been met? With argument? with reason? No, indeed! And how have we been treated? As gentlemen? as honest men? as equals in society? No, no! Denunciation and Abolition articles have been the weapons of our opponents. They recognize us not as honest men—not as ordinary criminals even—but as *traitors!* They further insult us and other good men by asserting or insinuating that we are merely put forward by others to serve their purposes in schemes of villainous ambition. In other words we are charged, in effect, with being the forerunners to prepare the way for certain "demagogues and aspirants to office." We know the men to whom they allude, and they are men before whose honesty and talents, the dark, malicious inuendoes of their defamers would shrink, abashed, back to their native hell! (Applause.) You all know, as I do, and as I here assert, that these charges, or insinuations

are false—that they were conceived in iniquity and brought forth in corruption, and that their intent is wholly evil. (Cries of, "That is the truth.").

I said that denunciation and Abolition articles have been the weapons of our opponents. I must make one honorable exception. A writer in the *Standard* of last Saturday attempts argument against us, and bases his argument upon the assumption that we are opposed to internal improvements and to the *amount* of taxes required to be paid into the State treasury. How such an idea ever got into the writer's head I know not. Most certainly nothing that we have ever said or done would justify such conclusions. So far as I know, every member of this Association is in favor of internal improvements, and in favor of raising the requisite amount of money, by taxation, to carry them on to completion. We have not complained that we paid *too much* taxes—we are willing even to pay more; but it is the unjust and unequal *mode* of taxation to which we object. For my part, I wish I had a thousand little negroes, and that every one was taxed for the purpose of extending our railroads West, or building them wherever they are required to develop the resources of my beloved native State. (Laughter and applause.) "Junaluska," over which name the article alluded to, appears, must not build a man of straw, demolish him, and say, "I have killed the Workingmen's Association." (Laughter.) I am not only ready and willing, but I am anxious to see a railroad built from the seashore to—ay, even to Ducktown, in the copper mining region of Tennessee. (Applause.) But I will proceed.

We are further charged with an intention of organizing a new political party. Demagogues and low-down politicians, and the scribbling slaves of unscrupulous cliques, are always the first to suspect rascality in others, because they judge others by themselves. ("That is so.") Here we are now, assembled together, and I see before me men of foreign and of native birth, and men of different political parties. We have published our platform, declaring this not to be a political organization; but our opponents presume to know our feelings better than we ourselves do, and say to us, in effect,

"You all lie—it *is* a political organization." They show their disrespect for us by interpreting our language to mean just the opposite of what we say. We can afford to be calm, for we are conscious of truth and justice on our side; but at the same time we can despise those who misrepresent us, and manifest towards them a proper resentment. We can hurl back into their teeth the foul charges they make, and the fonler insinuations they have not the temerity to charge direct. (Cries of, "We can and will.")

Another charge against us is that we are attempting to array class against class. What classes do we recognize as existing among us? I know of but two, the honest and the dishonest. We recognize no classes, so far as respectability is concerned, of rich and poor. We respect the honest man, and we despise the dishonest one. These are our classes, and this the distinction we draw between them. We weigh no man's respectability by his purse, nor measure his patriotism by the number of town lots, negroes, horses or cattle he may own. Some here own watches, and others do not; some own horses, and others do not; some own negroes, and others do not; but we are all mutually bound to protect the lives and property of each other, no matter what species of property it may be; and we are likewise bound, as we believe, and assert, *to pay taxes according to the value of the property thus protected by mutual agreement*, under a common government, framed for the security of the poor as well as the rich. (Applause.) Whether we possess much or little, it is our all; and the poor man's little is as important to him as the rich man's abundance is to him. If I have ten thousand dollars and you but one thousand, is the payment of ten dollars more burdensome to me than the payment of one dollar would be to you? Under the Jewish laws, framed by God himself, the *ad valorem* system of taxation was established. (A voice, "That is so.") He imposed a tax of one-tenth upon all. If two men had each a hundred bushels of barley, He did not require one to pay a tax of ten bushels and the other twenty; but if one owned a hundred bushels and the other two hundred, He required the former to pay ten bushels, and the lat-

ter twenty. Why was this? It was because he was a just and a righteous God, and was no "respecter of persons" or of property.

The last charge that I shall notice which our opponents have preferred against us is, I regret to say, *true*. In their wilderness of false accusations, I am sorry to find this solitary oasis of truth. Not that I am sorry they have told the truth, but that what they have told, on this point, *is* true. I would that their assertion in this particular, as in all others, were false. If I could only do so with truth, I would, with the utmost pleasure and the greatest alacrity, hurl back the charge. But I *must* admit it. Alas! that I must. It is an old saying that the truth often hurts worse than a falsehood. In this instance, that old saying is verified. Ay, this one truth from our adversaries is more galling than their score of misrepresentations. The charge—I dread to utter it and acknowledge its accuracy—is, that WE ARE POOR! (Laughter and applause.) I know not how it may be with the rest of you, but I do not think I ought to be punished very severely for this *crime*, for it was hereditary. (Laughter and applause.) It is a constitutional offense in my family. My consolation is that poverty, though a great inconvenience, is not a disgrace, except among those whose wealth alone renders them respected—I will not say respectable.

We are told that our grievances can only be measured by the amount of taxes we pay. This is a luminous, a logical and a very insulting argument, and one well worthy of its author, whoever he may be. If I am worth but one dollar, and am compelled to pay a tax of fifty cents, and another man who is worth five hundred dollars pays a tax of one dollar, who is the aggrieved party? According to the sapient writer of the foregoing, the five hundred dollar man has double the cause of complaint that I have, because he pays double the amount of taxes that I do. I have paid out half my fortune, and he has paid only one five-hundredth of his, yet his grievance is greater than mine! It is passing strange how ridiculous a man can sometimes make himself.

I recollect, on one occasion, when I was a small boy, walk-

ing up to a gentle old horse and wondering if I could jump upon his back. To make certain of it I led him up to a large stone, on which I mounted, and even then I felt doubtful of my ability to get on him. But I determined to make the attempt, and gathering all my energies for the effort, I leaped so far the other side that I lost my equilibrium, and came down, head foremost to the ground, cutting my underlip and bruising my face severely. The author of this declaration, that our grievances can only be measured by the amount of taxes we pay, reminds me of this youthful and indiscreet adventure of mine. He attempted to stride the hobby of ridicule, but he jumped too far, and simply became ridiculous himself. He attempted to kill us, but broke his own neck. May it be as profitable a lesson to him as my foolish attempt to mount the old horse has been to me. I have ever since tried to avoid *jumping too far.* (Laughter and applause.)

But before I forget it, let me here do the Warrenton *News* the justice to say that it has been more consistent in its friendship for the editor of the *Era* than the other papers of the State that have appeared friendly with him; for the *News* has published other matter for him. I think he (the *Era* editor,) has cause to complain of the other papers of the State who endorsed his sentiments in regard to our Association, that they have not also published that other matter for him. It shows ingratitude on their part in not reciprocating the favor he conferred in giving them aid in their attacks upon the Workingmen's Association. (Hisses and applause.)

But, Mr. President, is it not a little remarkable that Free Masons, Odd Fellows, Sons of Temperance, Merchants' Associations, Agricultural and Educational Societies, and a hundred other similar organizations, should be permitted to meet, some secretly, others, like ourselves, openly, and that nothing should be charged against them?—that they should not be subjected, as we have been, to the accusation of plotting, scheming, intriguing against the Constitution, the Union, or something else? How comes it that a few Workingmen, who have associated themselves together, should alone be charged with treason? No danger, it seems, is to be apprehended

from any but Workingmen. It is their business to work, not to talk, and whenever they open their mouths *treason* issues forth. (Sensation.) What a pity they were not all born deaf and dumb! What a blessing it would have been to the immaculate *patriots* of the present day! (Laughter.) To atone for this heinous sin, let us go and cut our tongues out. It will be a sacrifice acceptable to the disinterested conservators of our liberties.

But some members of our last Legislature, who voted for the present Revenue law, think we are attacking, or reflecting upon, them. This is a mistake. Had I been a member of the last Legislature, I would have voted for that law, as the best I could then do; and I have a very small opinion of the votes cast against it. (A voice—"So have I.") What was the alternative presented? It was to pass a law to raise revenue to meet the liabilities of the State, or else repudiate its plighted faith. Before I would disgrace North-Carolina—before I would violate her pledges, I would, as a member of the Legislature, when I could do no better, vote to impose *all* the taxes on any *one* species of property, be that species lands, negroes, white polls, or any thing else. If injustice must be done, let it be done to ourselves rather than to our creditors—to those who have trusted to our honor and invested their means in it. Sir, rather than see North-Carolina repudiate her honest debts—rather than see her violate her pledges, I would surrender to her what little possessions I have, and redouble my exertions to procure a scanty subsistence for my family and an ordinary education for my children. (Applause.) Yet the bowels of some have been moved with fear and trembling, lest our movement should seriously affect the price of State bonds! (Laughter and applause.) I have heard of tempests in teapots, and whirlwinds in patent churning having a rotary motion, but I have never known *even an old woman* badly frightened at either. (Laughter.) Will those who are thus alarmed at our organization, and are so fearful of the consequences of our action, come forward now, as we do, and say, "Here is all we possess: when the honor of North-Carolina demands or requires it, it is hers?" Ay, more—when

the honor, the safety of North-Carolina, or of *any species* of property within her limits, demands it, we will spill our blood in defense of that honor or that property?" Will they stand side by side, and shoulder to shoulder, with us, in maintaining our rights, no matter at what pecuniary sacrifice or loss of blood? If this government should fall into the hands of those who have avowed their hostility to the Constitution and to the guaranteed rights of the South, will those *patriots* tamely, ignominiously submit, or will they, join us in resistance? This is the touchstone—let them try themselves by it. Let them apply the test, and let that application decide who are the *traitors*. For us the ordeal has no terrors. (Applause.)

Of what material is this Association composed? Are we clothed in purple and fine linen? Are our hands soft and our fingers tapering like those of aristocratic blood and breeding? Are we accustomed to the soft siesta of the sofa, or to the effeminate indulgence of gentle dalliance with the waving curls of seductive women? Do we recline upon luxuriant couches while little slaves, *on which no taxes are paid*, soothe us to slumber with the gentle wavings of gorgeous fans? Are our nasal organs so imperial that the rainbow hues of the peacock's tail must ever be flitting before them to warn the little flies away, with a

"*Procul, o, procul este, nefandi!*"—(Laughter.)

Do we require the soft persuasion of downy beds, after days of toil, to lure to us "Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep?" Thank God that it is better to lie down with an easy conscience and a tired frame, than with a tired conscience and an easy frame! Thank God that the tedious hours of darkness are spent in "sweet oblivion," rather than in wakeful remorse! Thank God that we can arise in the morning with gratitude in our hearts and praises on our lips to Him who hath said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," nerved and strengthened for the labor of the day! Thank God that living hearts and willing hands sustain and encon-

age us! In these things we reap, in our poverty, a reward richer than that attendant upon wealth. (Applause.)

And if danger threaten—if invasion occur—if servile insurrection happen, who are relied upon to repel or to repress the foe? Is it the proud possessor of thousands; or the patriotic heart of him whose little is his all, whose frame is injured to hardship, whose soul is independent, and whose love of independence is stronger than his love of life? Your bones and sinews, and your unselfish, unconquerable hearts, are the pillars on which the temple of Freedom rests. Men like you achieved our liberties, and as their descendants it is enjoined upon you to preserve and perpetuate them. Our fathers bequeathed to us a glorious legacy, the priceless inheritance of Liberty, and if we hand it not down, unimpaired, to our posterity, the curse of Almighty God will be upon us. (Applause.)

I believe that the time is coming, and that speedily too, which will "try men's souls" as they were tried in our Revolutionary struggle. May God avert such a violation of our Federal Constitution as will render resistance to its violators necessary; but if that violation should occur, palsied be the tongue that would counsel submission with disgrace, and powerless fall the arm that is not lifted in the cause of honor! (Applause.) Already a Black Republican has been elected Speaker of the House of our national Representatives. Let it be followed by the election of a Black Republican President, and I am in favor of severing the few remaining ties that bind us to this Union. (Applause.) I reverence a constitutional Union; but a Union with a violated Constitution—a Union of oppression or of inequality, I abhor, as our fathers abhorred the tyranny of England in 1776. (Applause.) The ties that then bound the Colonies to the mother country were stronger than those that now bind the South to the North; and I here assert, and if I had time I think I could show, that the aggressions of Old England towards the Colonies never equalled those of New England towards the South. (Cries of "That is true.") Are we degenerate? Have we not the spirit of our fathers? With their glorious example

before us, can we insult their bones and ashes by tamely submitting to oppression? (Voices, "Never!") Would not their spirits haunt our midnight hours, and pointing their shadowy fingers in scorn at us, hiss into our ears, "DEGENERATE SONS!" When we submit to dishonor we shall deserve our fate; and when we submit to inequality we submit to dishonor. (Voices, "That is so.") When we die battling for the right, our death will be glorious, and posterity will embalm our memory, as we embalm that of our Revolutionary sires.

Mr. President, it has not been the members of the Workingmen's Association, nor the other friends of an *ad valorem* system of taxation, that have stirred up such strife and such agitation. The opponents of the system have made nearly all the din, and have certainly caused it all. The question was at rest, and all was quiet, until an opponent of the system, through the columns of the Raleigh *Standard*, called out a gentleman, who replied over his own name, though answering an article published over a fictitious name. After the formation of our Association we were charged with being the tools of others, Abolition articles were paraded against us, and we were abused and misrepresented. Good and honest men—men whose only fault was that they might be in somebody's way in a "wild hunt after office," were scourged over our shoulders; and an incessant warfare has been waged, ostensibly against us, but really against those whom they thought dangerous competitors for positions and honors to be conferred by a free and an enlightened people. What were we to do? Crouch and submit? Had we done so we would have deserved all that has been said about us. Our opponents have acted on the principle of "agitate! agitate! agitate!" and then hold us responsible for the agitation. (Cries of "That is so.")

But there is a species of *friendly enemies* to *ad valorem* taxation, worthy of our most exalted admiration. (Laughter.) They are those who tell you the system is right, but that its adoption involves an alteration of the Constitution, and that that Constitution, though perpetuating a wrong, is

so old that it is sacred, and therefore ought not to be touched. I am not one of those who believe age sanctifies error, and those who profess such a belief must admit that the devil is more respectable than themselves, or else they must claim to be older than he. (Laughter.) I shall leave the parties concerned to decide the matter among themselves. (Renewed laughter.)

In whose hands is the Constitution? For whom was it made? To whom does it belong? I say, *to the people*, and the people have just as much right to change as they had to frame or adopt it. Do these friendly foes fear to trust the people? Then they doubt the capacity of the people for self-government, and therein agree with the old Federalists who burned blue lights in the war of 1812, for the benefit of the enemy invading our land. For one, I am ready and willing to trust the people at all times and in all cases. If they desire a change in their Constitution they, and they alone, have the right and the power to make it. I see nothing sacred in what I consider wrong. If the system of *ad valorem* taxation be right, and the Constitution, as it is, prevents its adoption, while the present system is wrong, in the name of justice let the Constitution be altered. If the system we advocate can be adopted without altering the Constitution, then let us adopt it without any unnecessary trouble. "Where there is a will there is a way," and we believe that there is a *will* to adopt the *ad valorem* system of taxation, and if so, a *way* will be found. *Let its opponents remember that.* (Applause.)

Mr. President, since preparing the preceding portion of my Address, I have seen a resolution adopted by a political meeting, (I will not say of what party, for we ignore all parties here,) in Washington county, in this State, which is well calculated to strike terror to a *timid* body of men, as we are. In editorial phrase, "We clip the following from the Raleigh *Register*, it being one of a series of resolutions adopted by a large and enthusiastic meeting of the — of Washington county." I will read it to you:

"Resolved, That the principle avowed in what is called the "Working-Men's Association, in Raleigh," is readily understood. In it is recognized a covert and sinister purpose to change our Constitution which we value, and which should not be changed to suit every popular breeze gotten up by demagogues to suit their own personal or party views of expediency."

Gentlemen, when I lived in the mountains I used to hear that the fishermen down on Albemarle Sound were so *thin-skinned* that you might hold them up between you and the sun and see the fish bones in them; or that you might give them a pint of bald-face, and in ten hours afterwards, when they became dry, give them a shake and hear the fish bones rattle in them. (Laughter.) I never believed the story, at all; nor do I now believe it as a general thing among the inhabitants of that region; but I must express the belief that there are some men down that way *thin-skinned* enough to furnish a foundation for such rumor. (Laughter and applause.) But I congratulate these *fishy* gentlemen on their perceptive faculties. Our object is "readily understood." They see through us just as clearly as we could see the fish bones in them with the most favorable light. (Laughter.) They see our "covert and sinister purpose." No need of the spectacle man going down that way. (Laughter.) They require no optical assistance whatever. But I am consoled, as you all will no doubt be, to learn that these *transparencies* "value" the Constitution, and are opposed to its being shaken by "every popular breeze gotten up by demagogues." Considerate patriots! we thank you for your cold blooded, unprovoked insult. When we become demagogues ourselves, or when we place ourselves, at the highest bidder, for sale to demagogues, we shall expect a tremendous offer from you, and one defying all competition. (Applause.)

But a writer in the same little Tight-Squeeze (laughter) of this city, before mentioned, over the signature of "Anti-Advalorem," takes the ground, as I understand him, that negroes are not property. If this be so, it is useless to make any further fight against the Abolitionists, for we at once surrender all, and admit that their doctrine is right. The Tight-Squeeze (laughter) says the writer is "an eminent jurist."

He may be, but I beg leave to differ with him in this opinion. If all his judicial opinions are on a par with this one, I do not think they would be taxed much on the *ad valorem* principle. (Applause and laughter.)

Mr. President, I have not followed, very systematically, the positions laid down in the resolutions that have been offered; but I have endeavored to maintain their spirit. I hope they will be adopted without a dissenting voice. Although I drew them up, I do not claim them as mine exclusively, for I consulted with other members of the Association, and received from them valuable suggestions. I think we owe it to ourselves, as an Association, to repel in calm, but firm language, the charges and insinuations, unjust and untrue, that have been brought against us. We can feel deeply the insults offered us, and we can repel them in strong language; but let us be prudent and discreet, and give our opponents no advantage by an imprudent and an indiscreet course. Let us possess our souls in patience, for the day of retribution is approaching.

But, Mr. President, I have said enough for the present. I have endeavored to defend our Association against the unjust charges and insinuations preferred against it. I have spoken boldly, because I felt deeply. We have sons and daughters grown and growing up around us. Their reputation—their standing in society—depends, to some extent at least, upon the characters of their fathers. He that repels not an insult transmits infamy to his posterity; (Applause) and the sins of the fathers will be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generations. It shall never be said of me that I was charged with treason and did not repel the charge—that I did not hurl back upon my accuser the wrath of an honest and an indignant heart. No man shall, with impunity, charge me with scheming and plotting for my own aggrandizement, much less for that of others. Were I capable of such rascality, I should appropriate its advantages to myself, rather than to another. It shall never be truthfully said to my children, “your father did not resent the charge of treason preferred against him.” No Association of citizens of

which I am a member, shall be assailed, and I not raise my voice and wield my pen in its defense. We seek peace, and prefer it; but if our opponents choose war, so be it. We have put our hands to the plough, and will not look back. We throw no gauntlets, and we shun none thrown at us. We love our friends, we respect even opponents that treat us courteously; but for those who insult and abuse us, we have but scorn and contempt. (Cries of—"Good.") For those who go down to the sinks of Abolitionism, insulting us with worse than free negro testimony, we have no respect, and they can expect none from us. ("No, indeed.") We scorn and defy them all. They are worthy prosecutors of a prosecution founded on the evidence they adduce. (Prolonged applause.)

ERRATA.

Page 3, fifth line from bottom, read "or" instead of "of."

Page 14, last line, read "*loving*" instead of "living."

[The following are the resolutions referred to in the Address, and which were unanimously adopted by the Association :]

Resolved, That having formed our Association and announced our views on the subject of taxation, in an Address to the people of the State, we were not disposed, at present, to press the matter further. Having, as it were, planted the seeds of our sentiments, and believing they were in good soil, we were willing to wait for them to germinate in due season; but the use which has been made of articles from certain Black Republican newspapers, the effects of which were calculated, and no doubt intended, to prejudice and injure us in the estimation of our fellow-citizens, has not permitted us to remain silent without a sacrifice of honor—*a sacrifice we will never make.*

Resolved, That having expressed our views, and one of our members having ably defended us through the columns of the North-Carolina Standard, against the effects of the articles referred to, we are content to leave the whole question to the calm judgment of the people, feeling well assured that in this, as in all other matters, “Truth is mighty and will prevail.”

Resolved, That we repel with scorn and indignation the insinuation, by whomsoever made, that we are not true to and mindful of the best interests of North-Carolina; and that whatever may be said or thought of us, by those not disposed to do us justice, we say to them and to the State, that in the event of Seward’s election, or the election of any other Black Republican to the Presidency, we will be as willing and as prompt as any to maintain and defend Southern rights, even to the spilling of our blood.

Resolved, That if not as rich in this world’s goods as some others, yet what we have is as dear to us as great wealth is to its possessor, and much more necessary; and that we despise those who count our poverty a disgrace, and measure our patriotism by the amount of taxes we pay.

Resolved, That it does not follow, because the amount of taxes which we pay is not large, that we are not equally interested with those who pay larger taxes, in having a just system of taxation and good government.

Resolved, That our right to unite for the purpose of protecting and advancing the interests of labor, is as clear and as well founded as the right guaranteed by the Legislature to capitalists to unite in banking and other corporations to protect and advance the interests of capital.

Resolved, That while taking no part in the party politices of the day, we are nevertheless deeply impressed with the danger which threatens North-Carolina, as a sovereign slaveholding State; and that regarding it as infinitely more important to save than to reform a State, we are not disposed to make the question of *ad valorem* taxation paramount; but that

we will continue to defend ourselves if attacked, looking with hope to the next Legislature to remove the burden of taxation from labor, and to adopt such a plan of taxation as will be just to all persons and to every species of property.

Resolved, That the charge preferred against us in certain quarters, that we are the tools of any man or set of men, is wholly false, and that nothing but malice and a disregard for truth ever prompted such a charge.

Resolved, That those newspapers in the State that have heretofore published our platform and other matters for us, are tendered our thanks, and that they and all others not disposed to misrepresent us, be respectfully requested to publish these resolutions.





